

Delaware Confirms First Sussex County Influenza Case for 2015 – 2016

Dover – The Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH) reports the state's first Sussex County laboratory-confirmed case of influenza for the 2015-2016 flu season. The case involves a 61-year-old Sussex County woman who is recovering at home after a visit to the emergency room. There are two main types of influenza (flu) virus – types A and B – that routinely spread in people and are responsible for seasonal flu outbreaks each year. Sussex County's first case is strain B.

"Flu is now confirmed statewide," said Dr. Karyl Rattay, DPH director. "And, past experience shows that the number of lab-confirmed cases is smaller than the actual number of cases out there. Flu is here to stay this season and it's a good time to get vaccinated, stay home when sick, and wash your hands frequently."

Added Department of Health and Social Services Secretary Rita Landgraf, "Sussex County was hit hard early in last year's flu season, and almost all of those initial cases were infants, children, and young adults. Now is the time to protect your family and loved ones before flu cases increase."

DPH urges all Delawareans 6 months of age and older who have not yet been vaccinated against the flu to get a vaccination as soon as possible. The flu is easy to transmit and you can get it from healthy – but unvaccinated – children and adults. That's why DPH's "Get It" campaign especially encourages healthy 19- to 49-year-olds – who often skip the flu shot – to get vaccinated. The vaccine is readily available through medical providers, pharmacies, and some grocery stores. For a complete listing of DPH flu clinic scheduled this season,

visit dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph/fluclinics.html.

Flu vaccination reduces the risk of getting sick from the flu or spreading the disease to others. It is especially important that the following groups get flu shots:

- Pregnant women and their household contacts;
- Caregivers and household contacts of children younger than 6 months, since those children are too young to receive the vaccine;
- Seniors;
- Those with chronic conditions or compromised immune systems;
- Health care providers.

Delawareans are also encouraged to prevent infection by taking simple everyday measures such as washing hands, using hand sanitizer, covering coughs and sneezes and staying at home when sick. These efforts help stop the spread of respiratory illnesses including flu.

Flu symptoms come on suddenly, and include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, headaches and body aches, and fatigue. Some people get complications including pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus and ear infections. Providers can prescribe antiviral medicines to make illness milder, hasten recovery, and prevent serious complications, hospitalizations, and even death.

Beginning in October each year, DPH monitors the occurrence of influenza-like illness in hospitals, selected long-term care facilities and medical clinics to track flu trends in the state. During the 2014-2015 flu season, there were 28 flu-related deaths and 2,390 confirmed cases of influenza in Delaware, a significant increase in activity from the prior flu season.

Delaware has a total of 5 lab-confirmed cases for 2015-2016 to date; two in New Castle County, two in Kent County and one in Sussex County.

For more information on influenza prevention, diagnosis and treatment, call the Division of Public Health at 888-282-8672 or visit flu.delaware.gov.

A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind, or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit delawarerelay.com. Delaware Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, and drink almost no sugary beverages.